



MEDIA RELEASE

Howard Springs Nature Park

The public comment period for the Howard Springs Nature Park Draft Plan of Management has closed.

Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) Regional Director Darwin Parks, David West said the Draft Plan of Management has been available since 6 December 2006 and public submissions and comments closed on Friday, 9 February 2007.

Mr West said PWS rangers and planning staff were at the Howard Springs Shopping Centre and at the Nature Park speaking to Park users and members of the Public about the Draft Plan.

“This was an opportunity to ask questions, make comments or find out how to make a submission. The public has taken this opportunity to talk directly to Rangers and planning staff to express their opinions, suggest alternatives and have their say on the Draft Plan of Management,” Mr West said.

“Once collated, the public submissions will help the Parks and Wildlife Service to prepare a final Plan that takes account of community views and ideas and provides for the responsible management of the Nature Park and its values.”

“The main directions in the Draft Plan of Management include continuing use of the waterhole for swimming, further development of the park for tourism and recreation, implementing natural resource management programs, protection and interpretation of natural and cultural values as well as focusing on maintenance of water quality in and near the waterhole and spring, which are key attractions in the Nature Park.”

Mr West said monitoring and maintenance of the water quality in the pool to acceptable standards is a major part of this Plan.

“The waterhole was recently closed to swimming due to high bacteria levels, which is typical for this time of year,” Mr West said.

“The closure has allowed PWS staff to carry out maintenance work such as clearing of leaves and other debris from the waterhole, which contribute to increased bacteria levels.

“Several other actions are underway to improve the water quality at Howard Springs Nature Park including:

- Weeds have been removed from the swimming area and retained in the area behind the rope and buoys to act as a natural filter for silt and other debris;
- The bottom of the swimming area has been raked to assist with the break down of accumulated organic matter;
- Pumping has started to remove as much as possible of the organic bottom layer of the pool that acts as a store for bacteria including harmful bacteria.

Mr West said future works would include pruning and thinning of pool side vegetation, to reduce the amount of leaves falling into the waterhole.

“The vegetation on the banks of the pool has grown significantly in recent years, shading the water and reducing the amount of sunlight penetrating to the bottom of the pool. Sunlight assists with the breakdown of the organic layer and helps to control bacteria levels.

“Care will be taken to retain sufficient shade for visitors on the sides of the pool.”

Mr West said it is likely that with these measures in place and with ongoing monitoring and maintenance of water quality visitors will be allowed to swim at the popular swimming hole this dry season.

Ends

Media note _ For more information contact Dave West on 8999 4518.

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